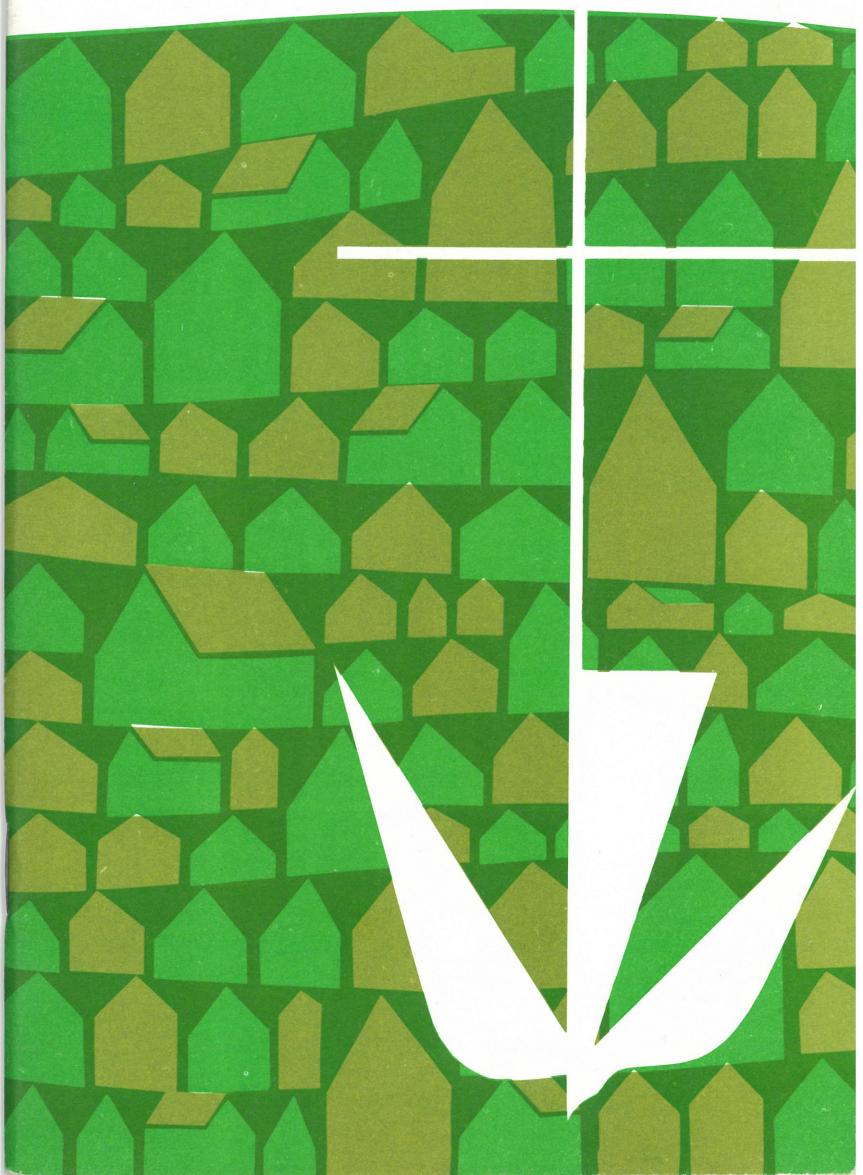
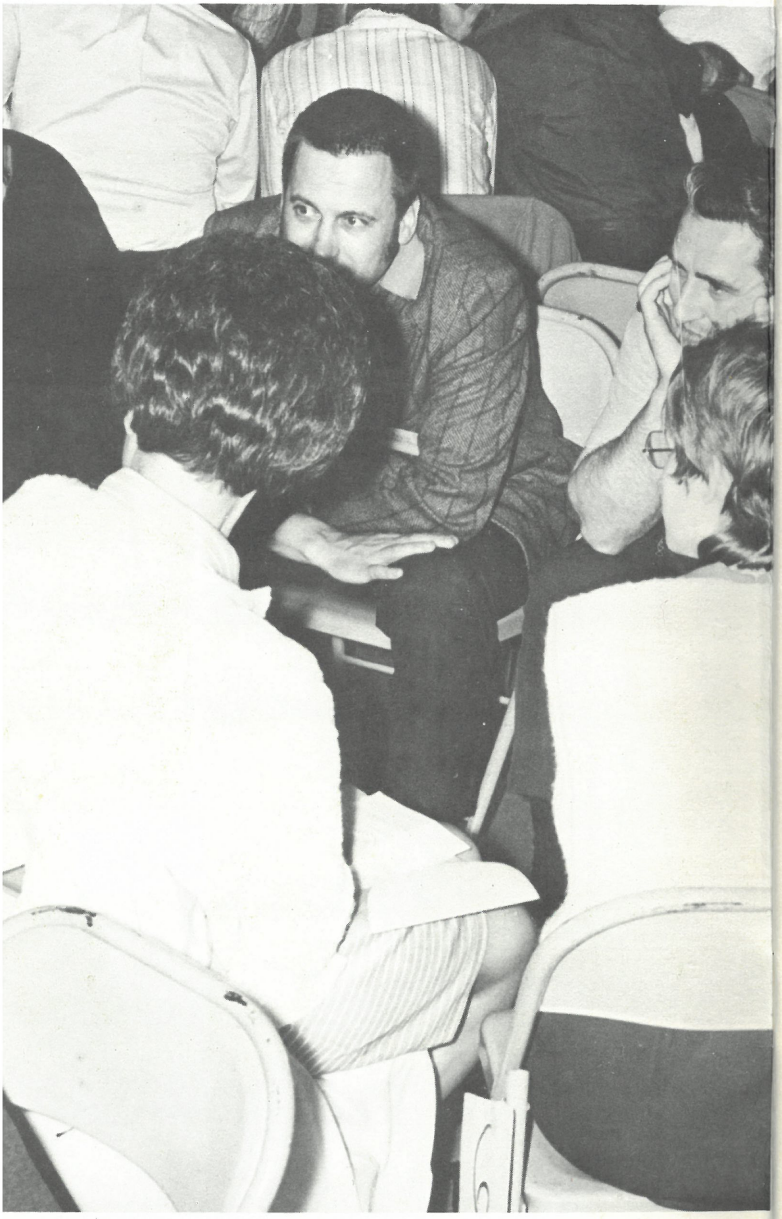
finding faith and fellowship





finding faith and fellowship

by Burton G. Yost

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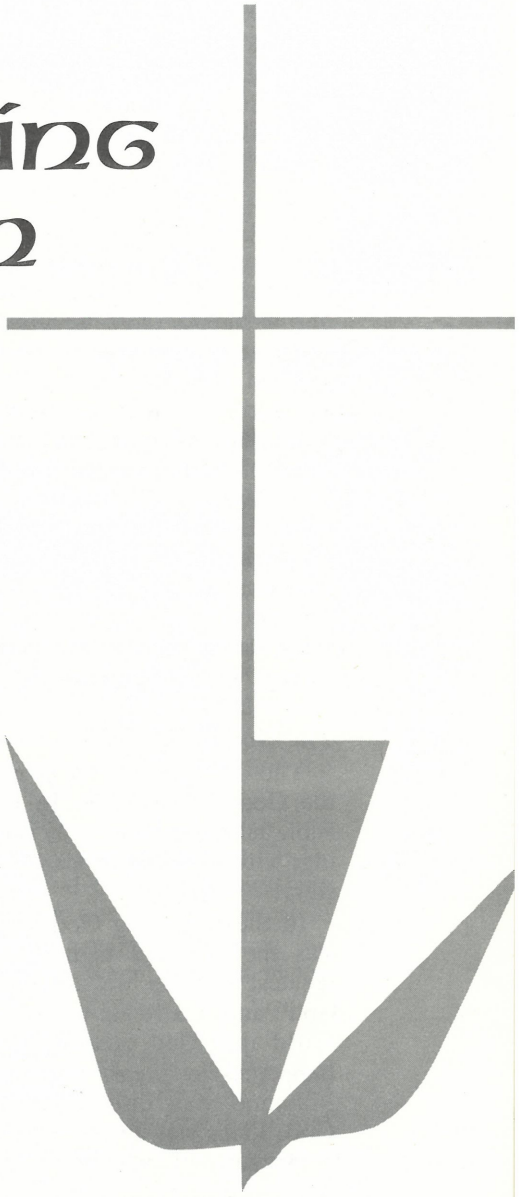
A GROUP OF MENNONITE MEN CAME IN TO clean up after a Kansas twister left the Morgan home in shambles. Mr. Morgan was very grateful to see someone come to help him pick up the pieces when things looked so hopeless. He didn't know where to begin. When the salvaged lumber had been placed in neat stacks and the rubble had been piled up at day's end, Mr. Morgan asked, "Who are the Mennonites anyway? We sure do appreciate it, but why did you bother to come here?"

"Many Mennonites cooperate in a disaster service program," said the spokesman. "We happen to belong to the General Conference Mennonite Church."

Mennonites, of course, do many other things. This booklet is designed to help persons like Mr. Morgan and others become better acquainted with us.

Like other churches we have a faith and a fellowship. We have certain beliefs, and because of those beliefs we have a certain type of Christian fellowship. We would like to tell you first about our faith, then about our fellowship.

1. finding faith



PEOPLE WANT SOMETHING THAT WILL NOT LET them down, something that will answer the deepest questions and hungers of the heart, something that is so true and real and basic that they can stake their lives on it. People are looking for a faith.

Beliefs or Faith?

In looking for such a basic faith people may think of a set of beliefs, a list of truths, a system of teachings. They want beliefs that touch life and give it meaning.

Most churches have a list of teachings called a creed or statement of faith. Mennonites are somewhat different here. While we have a statement of faith in which we list our beliefs, General Conference Mennonites have been reluctant to formulate and adopt creeds. They prefer to go directly to the Scriptures for matters of faith and practice.

What all of us need is faith. Faith not in some*thing,* but some*one*. That someone is God! What we are really looking for is God.

The God of the Bible

The God we look for is not just any god. He is the God of the Bible. In its sixty-six books the Bible tells one story. It is the story of God's dealings with man and of man's response. Look at this story.

In the beginning God created the world. Man was the last and highest creation. We are the greatest because we are made "in the image of God" and can relate to Him and serve Him. The world that God created is good, but something happened to break that relationship with God. Mankind was disobedient and rebelled against God. (This was and is our sin.)

Because of His great love for people, God sought to bring disobedient and sinful mankind

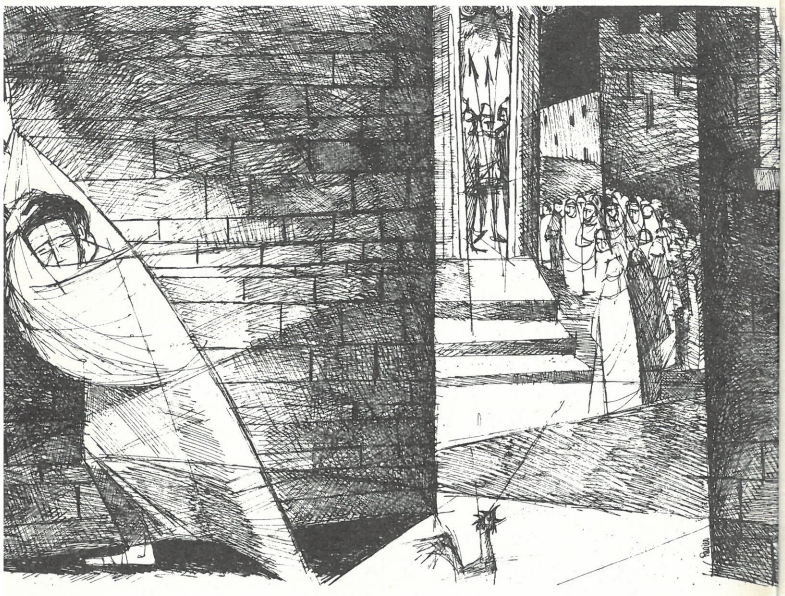
back to Himself. He showed His love and truth through men like Abraham, Moses, David, and later through the prophets. Constantly He called people to turn from their sinful ways and to live in obedience to Him. But the people continued to sin, doing as they pleased instead of worship ing and obeying God as they should.

Jesus Christ

At last, when the time was right, God sent His Son in a crowning effort to show His love and win us back to Himself (Luke 20:13; John 3: 16). His Son, Jesus Christ, showed that love by going about doing good and teaching men the truth about the Father. But the greatest show of love was when Jesus died on the cross (Romans 5:8; 1 John 3:16). That death on the cross opens the way to forgiveness of sins, to peace with God (Romans 5:1), and to heaven itself (1 Peter 1:3-5). Our disobedience, our sin, has been forgiven; the way back to fellowship with God has been opened. One thing remains. We must accept the forgiveness; we must start on the way back to God. We must say *yes* to what God has done through Jesus Christ.

The death of Jesus on the cross was not the end (1 Corinthians 15:26; John 11:25, 26). He rose from the dead, showing Himself to His friends, and He is alive today (Hebrews 12:2). Through Jesus Christ, God has done everything necessary to save us from our sin. The story of the Bible comes true in experience when we accept what God has done, when we trust in the faithful love of God. This response, this turning to God, is an act of faith.

So the Bible is the story of faith, a story of how God persistently acted to help people and how some saw God at work and had faith and were saved. Some did not believe God or did not follow Him, and those were lost. It is the story



Our sin has been forgiven.
The way back to fellowship with
God is open.

of Jesus Christ, God's Son, who came as Savior to forgive sins, to call people back to God, to give them eternal life. It is the story of those who had faith in Jesus Christ. Because the Bible tells us the true story of God and man, of sin and salvation, it is the only trustworthy guide for faith and life (2 Timothy 3:15-17). The Bible is the book of authority for those who have faith in Jesus Christ. He is the object of our faith, and the one we trust for forgiveness, for strength, for guidance to bring us back to God. He *has* everything we need, because He *is* everything we need. He is God's Son. He is our Savior.

What Have We Been Saying?

We sense a need in our lives. There is a restlessness, a dissatisfaction, guilt, a hunger for something better.

What we need is not merely a list of beliefs, but faith in someone who can help us in our need. What we need is faith in a God who gives meaning and purpose to life.

That someone is the God we find in the story of the Bible. And He is best seen in His Son, Jesus Christ—in His life and death and rising from the grave, and the abiding presence of His Spirit in the lives of those who trust Him.

What we are really looking for and what we need is faith in Jesus Christ as the One who can free us from the grip of sin, who can give us joy and purpose in life, and who can provide strength to do His will.

To such faith we invite you—faith in a person, faith in Jesus Christ.

All of us know something about Jesus. Perhaps some know about Him from Sunday school. Some may have studied volumes; and others, just a few Bible verses. It does not matter; everyone can take a step in faith. The step might be this: "I trust Him enough to want to learn more." Or

this: "I trust Him to help me, but I need help to trust more." The step of faith that each should take may be different. The one requirement is that it be genuine, that it come from the heart. Ultimately each person will want to say, "Yes, I know that Jesus is the only One who can forgive my sin and give my life meaning. I'll trust Him as my Savior."

Some who read this may already be Christians, and in one way or another have said this. Whether you are a Christian or merely curious about faith, we invite you to read about the meaning of faith.

Discipleship

As you see, faith is not merely a statement of beliefs. It is faith in Jesus Christ as Savior. But faith in Christ ought to go beyond this. Thus far we have spoken of trusting Christ for help, for forgiveness of sins, and for eternal life. But with the help He gives there is something that we must give. With His deliverance from sin there is a demand; there is a life to be lived. The new life must produce fruit.

In the New Testament, people who have this new life are called *disciples* (Matthew 10:38; Luke 14:27). A disciple is a person who learns and grows by following. You and I also are called to be friends of Jesus, to follow Him, and to be His disciples. This means several things:

1. *Jesus is Lord.* During His ministry, Jesus' followers called Him *Master* (John 13:13). They recognized Him as their *teacher,* as one who had the wisdom and authority to tell them how to live (John 6:68). After Jesus had risen from the dead and gone to heaven, the Christians began to call Him *Lord* (Philippians 2:11). They acknowledged Jesus as God (God's Son), and they also recognized that He had a right to rule their lives. Therefore, they pledged themselves to obey Him in whatever He told them to do.

Discipleship, then, means obeying the teachings of Jesus. What He lived and taught, we are to live and teach. He is the Lord and Master of our lives.

2. *A life of love and service.* You can sum up the life and teachings of Jesus in one word: *love.* But in order not to get mixed up in what we mean by love, we must look at the life of Jesus.

Jesus preached the good news about God's love; He healed the sick that were brought to Him; and finally He died so that people might live.

His teachings can be summed up in the word *love.* He said there are two great commandments: to love God with our whole being and to love our neighbors as we love ourselves (Matthew 22:36-40).

Jesus' whole ministry was helping people. He healed the sick, made the blind see, fed the hungry, forgave the guilty, and cast out demons from disturbed persons. He said that he "came not to be served but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many" (Mark 10:45). Wherever He went, whatever He did, He served someone who needed help.

He told His disciples that they must also serve others. Twice He sent His disciples out on preaching and healing trips (Luke 9:1, 2; 10:1). They were to do what He had been doing. In the story of the final judgment of all men before His throne, it is loving service that marks a person as "blessed of my Father" (Matthew 25:31-46). The Christian's life is to be one of loving service to all those about him.

3. *A life of stewardship.* Jesus told several stories about stewards, e.g., Luke 16:1. A steward was a person in charge of a rich man's estate. He was a manager. Christians are called stewards in the New Testament. They are managers of God's property and of God's gifts (1 Peter 4:10).

Jesus' whole ministry was helping people.

Since God created everything in the world. He owns everything. Thus all that we have by way of time, money, property, and talents came from God and belong to Him. All that we have He either gave us or permits us to have. We are responsible to use these possessions for His glory and mankind's benefit. Some day we shall be called to give an account of how we have managed God's property (Luke 6:12; Romans 14:12).

This life of stewardship should reveal a Christian attitude toward wealth and property. Wealth is to be *used,* not *hoarded.* Our abundance of food is to be shared with the hungry; our health is to be used to help the sick; all our gifts are to be used to bring God's love and truth to others.

Stewardship means that the Christian will be thrifty and hardworking. A good steward is not wasteful. But it also means that Christians should not be worried or anxious about daily needs of food and clothing (Matthew 6:25-33). The Christian steward lives in quiet confidence, knowing that his heavenly Father will supply all of life's needs.

4. *Living the Great Commission.* The last thing Jesus told His disciples before going to heaven was, "Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, . . . teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. . ." (Matthew 28:19, 20). This is called the Great Commission. A big part of our task is fulfilling this job of making disciples for Jesus wherever we go.

As His disciples we are to go to every nation and tell about Jesus. Having made disciples, we are to baptize them and form Christian fellowship groups. We are to teach others everything that Christ has taught us. Thus it is the disciple's job to help others know about Jesus, win them to faith in Him, and help them to grow in the Christian life.

This means that we should be interested in telling others about Jesus the Savior. We will want to tell our neighbors, fellow workers, and friends about Him. It means that we send others and go ourselves to be missionaries. We have established new churches in our cities. In Africa, South America, and Asia we have sent hundreds of workers to share our faith in Christ as the Savior of the world. This is the great privilege and responsibility of a true disciple of Jesus.

Summing It Up

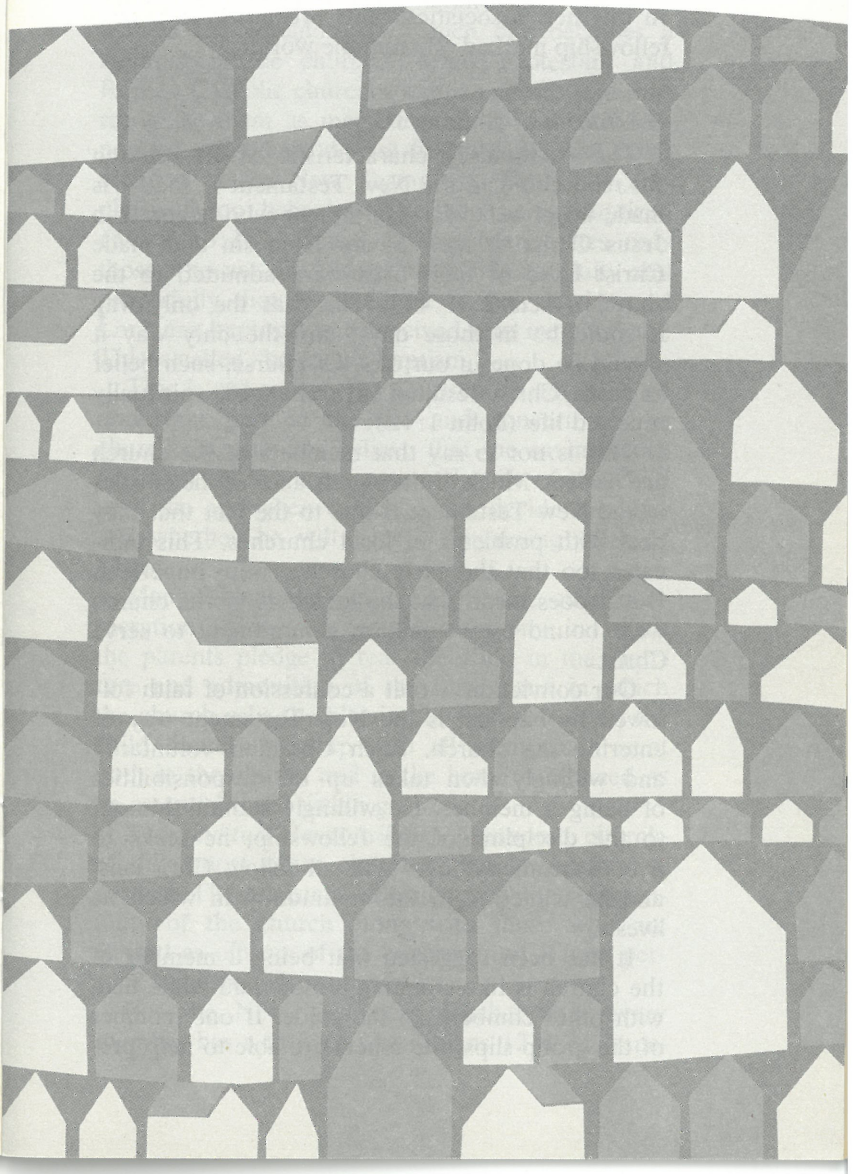
We could sum this up rather simply by saying: A disciple is a follower of Jesus. He needs to learn what is expected of a follower and to live in obedience to the commands of Christ.

A disciple lives a life of self-sacrificing love and service.

A disciple of Jesus is a faithful manager of all God's gifts.

He is obedient to Jesus' command to go and tell others about Him.

2. finding fellowship



UP TO THIS POINT WE HAVE DISCUSSED THE individual Christian's relation to other Christians. The Christian finds fellowship in the church. The church differs from other organizations. It is not just a local group, but it is worldwide and divine. In this new association the Christian finds a new fellowship marked off from the world.

A Church of Believers

The outstanding characteristic of the church we read about in the New Testament is that it is made up of believers. Only those who believed in Jesus Christ as their Savior from sin and made Christ Lord of their lives were admitted to the church (Acts 2:37-42). This was the only way it could be in those days, and the only way it should be done in our day. Of course, such belief in Jesus Christ resulted in a changed, spiritually renewed life (John 1:12).

This is not to say that members of the church are perfect. Much of the significance of the epistles in the New Testament is due to the fact that they deal with problems in local churches. This indicates too that the early churches were imperfect. But it does mean that the members of the church were bound by a common commitment to serve Christ.

Our conviction is that a confession of faith followed by baptism is the New Testament way of entering the church. Each Christian voluntarily and willingly then takes up the responsibilities of being a member. He willingly submits himself to the discipline of the fellowship, he seeks to live in brotherly love with all fellow Christians, and he witnesses to the community in which he lives.

It has been suggested that being a member of the church is like climbing a mountain while tied, with other climbers, to the guide. If one member of the group slips, the others are able to help pre-

vent him from sliding down the mountain. In the fellowship of the church we are united with Christ as our guide and are helped by the members of the church to live the Christian life in all of its relationships.

1. *Baptism.* Churches generally agree that baptism is the ceremony by which one becomes a member of the church. Many Protestant and Roman Catholic churches baptize infants and thus recognize them as members of the church. Mennonites and others do not find this practice commended in the New Testament. There the emphasis is on believing and then being baptized (Mark 16:16). Hence, among Mennonites only those who are old enough to decide carefully and prayerfully that Jesus Christ is their Savior and Lord are baptized and received into membership. This is called "believer's baptism."

This is not to say that children do not have an important part in the life and concern of the church. Mennonites believe that the saving work of Christ on the cross covers the life of the child until the age when the child can decide for himself whether he will accept the saving offer of Christ.

Many Mennonite churches practice child consecration. This is a simple ceremony in which the parents pledge to rear the child in the "nurture and admonition of the Lord" and in which the church asks the blessing of God to rest on the child. Family worship with all members present both in the church and in the home is stressed as an essential to Christian growth.

2. *Individual Responsibility.* Mennonite churches, like most other churches, have ministers or pastors. The ministers officially carry the responsibility of the church along with those who are elected as officers of the congregation. These persons have special responsibilities.

But the New Testament teaches that every member has a task (1 Corinthians 12:4-31, espe-

cially verse 7). The whole work of the church in teaching, preaching, serving, and witnessing is the responsibility of each member. The home becomes a place where God is worshiped, the Bible is studied, and the Christian faith is lived. Though the pastor may in a special way be the servant of the community, each member is seeking ways to be of service to others. Each Christian is responsible to see that the church is teaching and doing the will of God, and each Christian has a part in that task.

3. *Brotherly Love and Mutual Aid.* A member of a Christian fellowship seeks to do good to all men, "especially to those who are of the household of faith" (Galatians 6:10). Their common faith and manner of life helps to unite believers as children of God, as brothers and sisters in Christ (1 John 3:10). This is why they are concerned about helping one another. When there is sickness or trouble, other members are ready to help with money, labor, or counsel. In rural areas this might mean help in harvesting crops or building a barn. In towns or cities it might mean help in starting a business or giving blood for a sick friend. This mutual aid may mean low cost hospital insurance or low interest rate loans. Where this attitude exists there are many ways to extend helpful hands (Galatians 6:2).

4. *Church Discipline.* Christians are concerned about the physical well-being of other Christians, but they are even more concerned about their moral and spiritual welfare. If aid is given in time of sickness, it should also be given in time of spiritual weakness. On one hand, this means encouraging fellow believers, standing by them in time of temptation or discouragement, and showing redeeming love when they fall into sin (1 Thessalonians 5:14). On the other hand, it means that they are responsible to warn other church

The church teaches,
and each Christian has a part in that task.

members of wrongdoing and help them turn away from those sins. It may even mean taking away membership rights for a time (James 5:19, 20; Matthew 18:15-17).

The members feel responsible for one another and will counsel and encourage each other; if necessary, they will rebuke and discipline each other. It strengthens a person to know that others stand behind him to help. But it means that each Christian must be willing to accept the warnings and discipline of the church as well as its counsel and encouragement.

Like a good family, the church has a common task and each member does his part. When anyone suffers, the others come to his aid. Each is born into the family by the love of God, but each one stays only by his own faith and work. Of his own choice each enters by baptism; by daily choices he lives the life of a child of God.

A Fellowship of Service

In a sense the church is also like a service organization. It is a group of persons brought together by a common faith in Jesus and who now band together to serve in the name of Christ (Matthew 5:14-16).

It was mentioned earlier that each Christian as a follower of Jesus will want to live a life of service for others. There are some things that only a group can do. There are some things that a group can do better than an individual. One person can be a doctor or a nurse, but it takes a large group to build a hospital or home for the aged. So Christians unite as a group to do acts of service for a needy world.

These services include hospitals, homes for the aged, relief work among war victims, rehabilitation of refugees, disaster service in areas flooded or shattered by storms. These services also include sending people to work in mental hospitals,

Worship and service go hand in hand. Here meat is prepared for canning and shipping.

crippled children's camps, and among migrant laborers. In fact, wherever there is a need, there is an opportunity for the church to serve.

A significant part of this service to the needs of the world is through the missions program. The love of God is demonstrated, the good news of salvation is preached, the truths of the Bible are taught, and the church is established and built. Hospitals, clinics, grade and high schools, kindergartens, and Bible schools all work together to bring Christ to people who do not know Him. Christian service also means missions, and Christian missions means service to others.

Worship and service go hand in hand. Those who show their love to God in acts of worship must also show love to their fellowmen in acts of service (1 John 3:17, 18).

The Way of Love

As Christians who take the teachings of the Bible seriously, Mennonites believe that war is opposite to all that Christ taught and lived, that war is sin. Most Christians agree that war is wrong. But Mennonites feel compelled to take the next step and refuse participation in war. Mennonites, Church of the Brethren, and Friends have held this conviction from their beginning. More recently many Christians in other denominations have taken a similar stand. Persons thus refusing to participate in war and military service are known as conscientious objectors or pacifists. Unlike some pacifists who base their convictions solely on humanitarian considerations, Mennonites base their objections to war on the Scriptures and supremely on the life and teachings of Jesus and what He revealed to be the will of God.

We have already seen how a Christian is eager to serve his fellowmen through deeds of love. Jesus teaches clearly that we should help not

only our friends and neighbors, but our enemies as well (Luke 6:27, 28). It is impossible to see how we can love and kill at the same time. The New Testament tells us that we are not to return evil for evil or violence for violence, but rather return good for evil (Romans 12:17-21). Further, Jesus said that it is better to suffer wrong and injustice than to cause others harm (Matthew 5: 38-42). It is better to die for our faith and the things we love than to kill for them. The weapons of the Christian are not those that kill and maim, but they are the spiritual weapons of love and prayer (2 Corinthians 10:3, 4). All of these teachings taken together form what is sometimes called "nonresistance" (Matthew 5:39).

Another reason why Mennonites believe Christians should not go to war is that war divides the body of Christ, the church. Since there are Christians in almost every nation, it means that in war brother is fighting brother, and brother is killing brother. Certainly this is contrary to Jesus' prayer that "they [the Christians] may be one even as we [Jesus and the Father] are one" (John 17: 22). Approving of war and engaging in it denies the worldwide brotherhood of man.

In past years Mennonites have responded to governments' requests for military service with alternative service—CPS, Pax, Voluntary Service, 1-W assignments—all efforts to contribute to health, safety, and welfare. Some people have chosen to confront the request for military service with more direct opposition, such as going to prison rather than participate at all. Some have chosen to change their citizenship. This is done in the spirit of love, not rebellion.

Conscientious objectors are faced with the decision not of *whether* to fight but *how* to fight. We want to assist in overcoming evil, not shutting ourselves off from it. Evil can only be overcome with good. This means resisting bad ideas by offering good ideas. It means removing the economic frus-

War divides the body of Christ.

trations which breed violence. It means getting into the conflict as peacemakers, rather than trying to withdraw from conflict.

Mennonites and other nonresistant Christians are sometimes misunderstood and criticized for their stand on war. Our simple desire is to be loyal, law-abiding citizens who give their time and energy for the welfare and peace of all men. However, when we must choose, we will "obey God rather than men" (Acts 5:29).

Efforts to find a positive alternative to war led Mennonites to work in overseas relief, voluntary service, disaster service, and in the development of six mental health centers.

Distinctive Beliefs and Practices

Two distinctive teachings of the Mennonite church have already been mentioned—believer's baptism and nonresistance. There are other things that differentiate us from most Protestant denominations.

Jesus warned against careless or profane use of speech (Matthew 12:36); He forbade the use of oaths (Matthew 5:33-37). Mennonites therefore do not take the oath in courts of law or other legal transactions, but instead fulfill legal requirements by a simple affirmation. There are not two standards of truth, one for ordinary use and another for testimony "under oath." In everything the speech of a Christian is to be truthful (Matthew 5:33-37).

Mennonites generally do not belong to oath-bound secret societies. They are afraid that as Christians they might in the process compromise their faith (2 Corinthians 6:14). A Christian has one supreme loyalty, namely to Christ, and this is not to be compromised by any other binding allegiance. Furthermore, membership in such societies tends to cut apart the body of Christ, the church. The church is the true brotherhood under

God, and it should not be fragmented by the demands of other brotherhoods.

Simplicity has been emphasized. This concept includes simplicity in dress and material possessions, thrift, and satisfaction in work and pleasure. The idea of simplicity carries over to worship and church buildings as well. Members of the church know each other by first name and enjoy informal and friendly fellowship. Church government is simple and democratic, each congregation being an independent unit. Close fellowship and a simple type of worship have characterized Mennonite life.

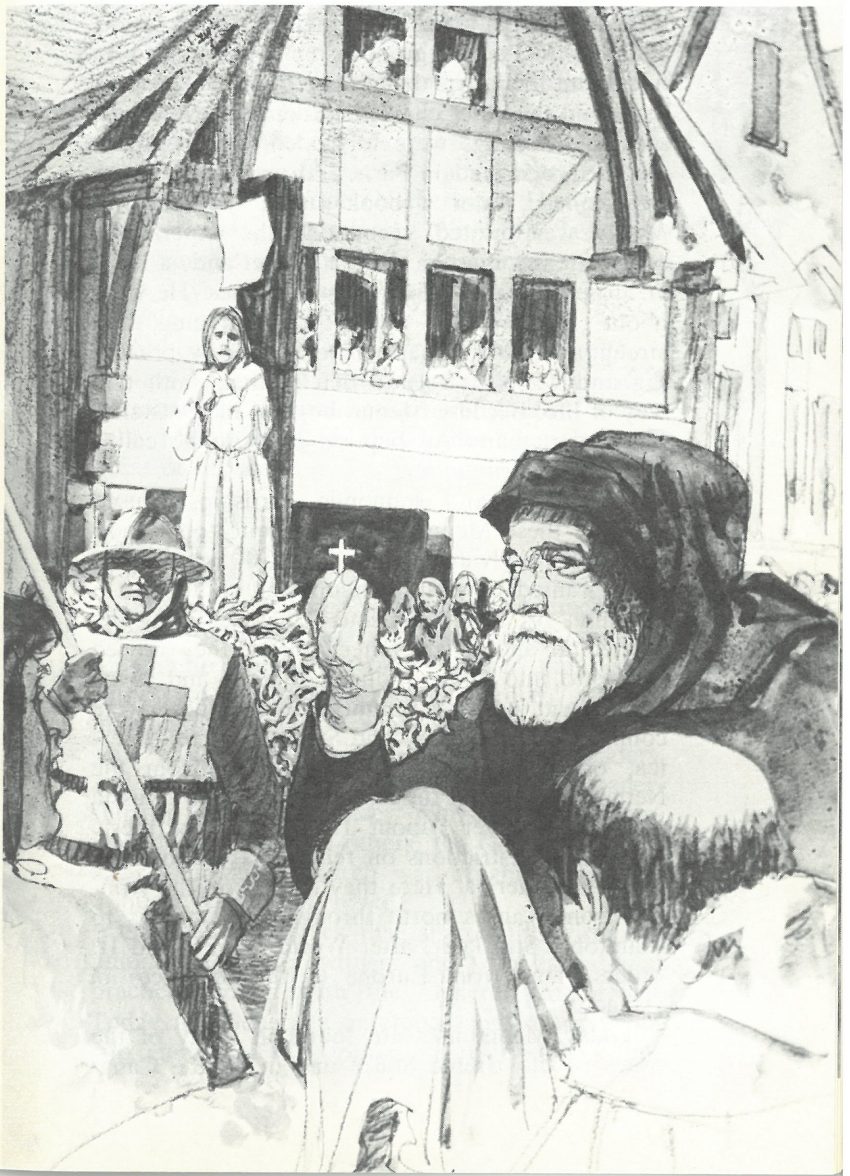
Another emphasis is the building of strong Christian homes. Marriage is considered sacred, offering the highest possibilities for joy and sacred responsibilities. The lifelong vows of marriage should not be taken lightly, nor regarded as something that can be easily ended by divorce (Matthew 19:3-9). A Christian home is the place where parents and children "grow in the grace and knowledge of Jesus Christ" as they pray, work, and play together.

Where Do the Mennonites Come From?

Mennonites were first known as Anabaptists (rebaptizers). Groups of these believers arose in Switzerland and Holland at the time of the Protestant Reformation (the early 1500s) when groups were breaking away from the Roman Catholic Church and re-forming into different churches. These people, called Anabaptists, did not feel that leaders like Martin Luther and John Calvin were going far enough in reforming the church. They desired a church fellowship more nearly like the church we read about in the New Testament.

These small groups under the leadership of men like Conrad Grebel in Switzerland insisted that only true believers, those who were "born anew," should be baptized, and that instead of a com-

There arose a leader by the name of Menno Simons who went about encouraging the persecuted Anabaptists.



pulsory state church there should be a voluntary free church. They further insisted that a Christian's life should be different; it should be like Christ's. Believers were not to kill or practice the common sins of mankind. The Bible was to be the only true guide for faith and life.

These Anabaptist groups grew and came to be hated for their firm beliefs by both the government and the other churches. Soon they were persecuted. Meetings were forbidden, members imprisoned, and leaders burned, drowned, or otherwise killed. Later a book called the *Martyrs' Mirror* was printed, recounting the experiences of these early martyrs. In the Netherlands a leader arose by the name of Menno Simons. He went about northwestern Europe encouraging and strengthening these persecuted people by preaching and writing tracts to defend their faith and way of life. Because Menno became the outstanding leader, many Anabaptists came to be called *Menists* or *Mennonites*.

Persecution and economic hardships caused some of these Mennonites to migrate to the colony at Pennsylvania about A.D. 1700 where they were granted religious freedom and could start a new life. As others came to America during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, they moved westward into Ohio, Indiana, Illinois, and Iowa. Some went north to Ontario. While these were coming from Germany and Switzerland to America, other Mennonites were moving from the Netherlands to Prussia, Poland, and Russia (Ukraine). Later (about 1870) some of these, because of restrictions on religious freedom, also came to America. Here they settled on the frontier from Kansas north through the Dakotas to Manitoba. Still later, after World Wars I and II, others came from Europe to the provinces of Canada.

Today Mennonites are found in many of the states of the United States and in all the Cana-

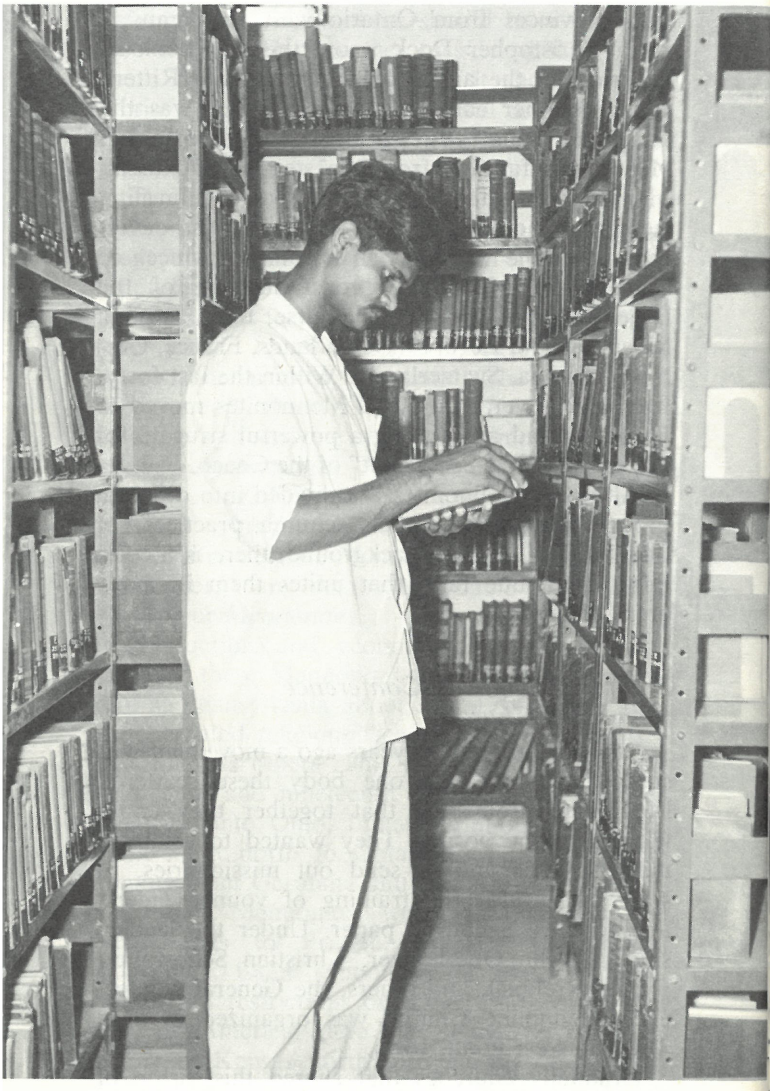
dian provinces from Ontario west. In Pennsylvania Christopher Dock wrote the first book in America on the art of teaching. William Rittenhouse, another early Mennonite leader, was the first paper manufacturer in the American colonies. Mennonites farmers from the steppes of Russia, who brought with them their wheat and farming methods, made a large contribution in the development of the wheat belt. In some provinces of Canada the Mennonites constitute one of the larger religious groups. Of course, there are still Mennonites in Europe (Netherlands, France, Germany, Russia, Switzerland). Within the last forty-five years several thousand Mennonites moved to Paraguay and are waging a powerful struggle for a living in the "green desert" of the Chaco.

Although Mennonites are divided into different groups because of beliefs, church practices, or national and cultural background, there is a common Mennonite faith that unites them in many areas of service.

What Is the General Conference Mennonite Church?

Just over a hundred years ago a movement was started to unite into one body these scattered Mennonite groups so that together they could witness to the gospel. They wanted to establish mission fields and to send out missionaries, to start schools for the training of young leaders, and to have a church paper. Under the leadership of John Oberholtzer, Christian Schowalter, Daniel Krehbiel, and others, the General Conference Mennonite Church was organized in May 1860 at West Point, Iowa.

Gradually churches that shared this vision of union and greater witness and who had similar practices united with the General Conference. Today the General Conference consists of about 300 churches with approximately 56,000 mem-



Yeotmal Seminary in Maharashtra, India, is included in the work of the Commission on Overseas Mission.

The Commission on Home Ministries reaches into cities in the name of Christ.

bers scattered across the United States, Canada, Mexico, and South America. These congregations are organized into five districts in the United States. Most of the churches of the Conference of Mennonites in Canada belong to the General Conference, and several churches in South America also have joined. These district conferences provide a closer area fellowship of churches and have their own mission outposts, institutions, and educational projects.

The General Conference has its central office at Newton, Kansas. Four elected commissions direct the work of the conference.

The Commission on Overseas Mission supports the work of about 160 workers in Zaire, Lesotho, India, Taiwan, Japan, Mexico, Paraguay, Uruguay, Bolivia, and Colombia. In addition, much of its work is done in cooperation with the Mennonite Central Committee, relief and service agency for most Mennonite groups.

The Commission on Home Ministries is responsible for work in the areas of voluntary service, Indian ministries, peace education, evangelism, church planting, poverty, and radio and television. It coordinates about thirty salaried workers in Colorado, Montana, Arizona, Oklahoma, and Mississippi, in addition to about 150 voluntary service workers in the United States and Canada.

The Commission on Education is responsible for Christian education and publishing. It prepares and produces Sunday school and special study material. It cooperates with the other commissions in creating topical studies. It relates to the institutions of higher education in the conference as well as to Mennonite students wherever they attend.

All legal, financial, and business affairs are handled by the Division of Administration.

Though the General Conference Mennonite Church is a small denomination, a great deal of

work is carried on under its direction. God has called us to enlarging tasks; it is our intention to respond with dedication and willing hearts.

an invitation

NOW WE HAVE INTRODUCED OURSELVES. YOU know what we mean by faith in Jesus Christ. You have had a glimpse of our way of life, our background, and our present endeavors. In all of these areas we have tried to be faithful to God as He has spoken to us through the Bible and by His Holy Spirit. We are aware that there are weaknesses in our lives, places where our practice does not match our statements of faith. But we are seriously endeavoring to be faithful to the Lord Jesus Christ and so be a part of His true church.

If this sounds to you like a church that is striving to be faithful to the Bible and loyal to Jesus Christ in doing the will of God, we cordially invite you to further acquaint yourself with us through one of our churches. There we would like to learn to know you better, to share our blessings with you, and to work side by side in the name of Christ.

May God guide your life!

This booklet was written under the guidance of the Commission on Education of the General Conference Mennonite Church.

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